

He Who was once a Little Child



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He Who was Once a Little Child



STORIES OF JESUS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
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THE INFANT JESUS AND THE SHEPHERDS

ON the night that Jesus was born, there were shepherds out in the fields, below Bethlehem, watching their sheep, to keep them safe from wolves and bears. Suddenly a shining angel stood in their very midst. When the angel saw that the shepherds were afraid of him, he told them not to fear, for he had come with joyful tidings to all people. He said that a little Child Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, and the shepherds were to go and find Him, wrapped in baby clothes, and lying in a manger.

Then a multitude of angels passed over the sleeping town, singing,—

“Glory to God in the highest,
On earth, Peace,
And Goodwill toward men !”

When the singing passed away, the shepherds looked for the bright angel at their side, but he was gone.

Girding their tunics up through their leather

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belts, and lifting their long sticks from the ground, the shepherds set off to climb the stony path up to the town, and were soon knocking and shouting at the gate to waken the watchman. Hastening along the street, they began to run in their eagerness to be first to reach the place.

When they came to the inn, they were told that a little child had indeed been born that night in the stable. With beating hearts they held aside the curtain that covered the doorway. There, by the light of the stable lantern, they saw Mary from Nazareth, and Joseph her husband. In eager words they told Joseph about the angels out on the plains. When Joseph knew that they were friends, he beckoned them to come near and look. They came softly in, stooping and kneeling, and looked upon the face of the little Child. Joseph held up the lantern that they might see Him better, and Mary bade them hush, and not disturb Him in His sleep. These rough shepherds loved children, as all good men do, and they worshipped the little Child, wondering that the Christ should be born in a stable, and not in a palace ; and they rejoiced that they should be the first to see and worship Him whom all the world would worship.

The shepherds did not stay long, and, as they



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turned to go, they murmured blessings upon the sweet young mother and her wonderful Child. Outside, they told Joseph the whole story of the angel standing among them while they were watching their sheep, and what he said, and of the throng of angels that passed across the sky, and what they sang. They also told the story over again to whoever would listen to them, until all the people in the inn had heard their strange tale, and all were curious to see this wonderful Child of the young mother from far-off Nazareth.

But that was not all the shepherds did. As they went back through the town on their way to their companions down on the plains, they leapt for joy, and shouted that all who cared to listen might hear the great glad News. And women looked out of their doors to see who the strange men were, who were making the streets ring with their shouts. This is what they heard them shouting to every man they met :—

“Praise be to God ! The Christ has come !”

In every house of Bethlehem, that morning, the strange behaviour of the shepherds was talked about, and many repeated their joyful words. And when the shepherds reached their companions down in the

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fields, they told them what they had seen in the inn, and of the beautiful Child and His sweet mother, and their companions leapt and rejoiced with them.

Little children wonder why there is so much happiness at Christmas-time, and why so many sweet hymns are sung. It is because Jesus was born in that little town of Bethlehem, on that starry night so long ago. And so little children are glad when they hear of it, as these country shepherds were.

THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST

ONE day the people of Jerusalem saw a strange sight. Three Wise Men from the East rode through their streets upon camels, with camel cloths of green and yellow hung with fringes of wool tassels and white shells. As they rode slowly up the main street from the city gate, they asked to be directed to the house where the young King had been born. The people did not know about whom they were talking, and answered that there had been no young King born that they had heard of. The only King was an old King, called Herod, who lived in the white palace on the hill.

The Wise Men shook their heads, and rode on through the streets repeating the question as they went, until all the people wondered. What country they came from, and what were their names, we do not know. It is thought that they were from the land of Persia, and when French children sing about them, they call them Melchor, Gaspar, and Beltazar.

When the Wise Men reached the market-place

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they again stopped their camels, and the people gathered round them looking at their rich clothing, their cloaks of blue brodered with gold, and their turbans of red and brown, and at the mysterious bundles tied to their brass-mounted saddles. When the people asked them questions, they answered that they knew a young King had been born, for they had seen a new star in the sky, and had followed it to Jerusalem. And although the people laughed and mocked at them, yet they did not give up their search for the young King nor leave Jerusalem.

Now Herod was an old and wicked and cruel King. He ordered any one to be killed that he did not like, even his own son. Somebody told him these Wise Men of the East were saying, as they went about the streets, that they had come to worship the new-born King of the Jews.

Now old King Herod knew that many people were expecting the Christ to appear shortly, so he sent for the chief men of the Temple to come to his palace, and when they came he questioned them as to where the Christ should be born. They answered that Bethlehem was the place mentioned in the Bible. Then King Herod sent the chief men of the Temple away, and ordered the Wise Men of the East to be brought before him.

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He had formed a plan, and it was no new plan for him. He would find out where this young Child was, who was being called the King of the Jews, and would have Him killed. He would have no other King in the land than himself.

The Wise Men were not surprised when a King's messenger came and took them up to the palace on the hill. They quite expected to see a baby King, but instead of that they saw the old King Herod in his red robe. He received them pleasantly, and inquired all about the star which had guided them to Jerusalem, and where they had come from, and how long they had been on the road. No doubt they had King's dainties put before them, and after they had eaten and refreshed themselves, he told them to ride up the Hebron road, to the little town of Bethlehem, and there they would find the young Child King. He did more, for he went on to tell lies. He told the Wise Men, that when they found the young Child, they were to be sure and come back and tell him, for he also wished to go and worship the young Child. It is a pity when kings tell lies, because they deceive so many of their people. The Wise Men were at once deceived, and went away thinking what a fine old King he was. They did not know what a cruel, wicked, and

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deceitful King he was, nor that he had put his own wife to death.

When the Wise Men came down the white steps from the King's palace on the hill, they were much pleased to see again the eastern star in the sky, which they had followed from their own far-off land. They told their servants to put the saddle-cloths on the camels, and the heavy wooden saddles, for they must leave Jerusalem, and ride along the hills to Bethlehem. They told the people that they now knew where the young King was, for the old King had told them, and that the old King himself was going to worship Him too. The people smiled, for they knew Herod much better than these Wise Men did.

Out through the low archway of the Bethlehem gate rode the Wise Men on their richly harnessed camels, with their servants riding on camels behind them. The servants carried tufted spears in their hands, and knives at their belts, to protect their masters from robbers on the hills. The red guiding star was now shining in the South, and with their faces turned towards it, the Wise Men rode on, until they saw the white walls of Bethlehem on the hill, with the moonlight on them. And now the star seemed to be shining right over the little town, and

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the Wise Men rejoiced, and waited for the red dawn to appear over the Hebron hills.

As soon as the gates were opened at dawn of day, they rode in and inquired for the house where Joseph and Mary lived, until they found it. Mary was astonished when she was told that three great men, on richly dressed camels, were in the street, inquiring for her little Child. She invited them to come in and see her Child, but they would not come until they had opened the bundles tied to their saddles, and taken out the presents they had brought from their far country.

When the Wise Men entered the little house, they found the Child Jesus on His mother's knee, and they at once knelt down before Him murmuring words of blessing and thanks, as they laid their presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, in little parcels on the floor. They rejoiced at the thought of having discovered the red star, just about the time that the little Child was born. They also told Joseph and Mary what they believed was great and pleasing news—that the old King of Jerusalem himself was coming to Bethlehem to worship their beautiful Child, who would one day be the King of the Jews. And again the young mother was astonished, but she was afraid also, for she had heard much about the

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cruel deeds of King Herod, and she talked with her husband Joseph about the fears that were in her mind.

Mary washed the feet of the Wise Men and put simple food before them, before they left her little house to find lodgings for the night.

Next morning she was surprised and pleased to see them again at her door. But this time they had very grave faces, for they had dreamt a dream in the night which warned them that they were not to tell Herod that they had found the Child Jesus. They told Mary that they were not going back to Jerusalem, but would ride home to their own country by another road. Mary was glad that the wicked King would not know where Jesus was living, and yet the fear had entered her heart that he would send his soldiers to find out.

Standing at the door of their house, Joseph, and Mary with the little Child Jesus in her arms, saw the Wise Men, with a crowd of children following after them, riding down the narrow street, and she never saw them again.

Shepherds worshipped the little Babe in the manger, Wise Men worshipped the Child on His mother's knee ; and all little children, when they read or hear these beautiful stories, should open their hearts and worship Him too.



THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

ONE of the most joyful days in the happy boyhood of Jesus was the great day when Joseph and His mother took Him for the first time to the Golden Temple in Jerusalem. He was then twelve years old, and lived in the little village of Nazareth, away up in a hollow of the northern hills. All the village people loved Him because of His gentleness and thoughtfulness.

It was the custom for all boys when they reached the age of twelve to go with their parents to worship at Jerusalem. To country boys, living among fields and hills and sheep, the prospect of going to see a crowded city was very pleasing. His mother told Jesus that the most wonderful and beautiful sight in the whole world, was when He came over the hill of Olivet and saw for the first time the great Temple, with the sun shining on its golden roof. She told Him how the people burst into singing at the sight, and said that whoever had not seen it, did not know what joy was.

And so Jesus watched His mother getting ready

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their best holiday clothes, and Joseph putting fresh tassels of red and green and yellow on the ass's harness, and mending their sandals, and cutting long sticks for the journey, and He knew that the great day was near. Bands of people went from every village, with always some boys among them, so that Jesus had many companions when they started on the long walk of eighty miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem. They were going to the greatest festival of the year, the Passover Festival at the time of the full moon in the month of April, so that the people could see their way along the roads at night, for in those days there were no lamps.

The bands of people grew larger, until they crossed the river Jordan at the wading-place, and went up through the narrow path in the hills. There they rested a while to put on their best clothing, their striped cloaks of red and green, their white tunics, and their head-shawls with coloured fringes. When all was ready, they marched over the hill of Olivet, where the flowers of yellow and blue and scarlet were so thick, that the people called it a flower carpet, and then they saw, across the brook Kedron, the great city of Jerusalem, with the Golden Temple in the midst, and the heart of the boy Jesus rejoiced at the sight.

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He lived there for a week. Every day His mother took Him to the Temple on the hill of Moriah, where He saw sights which filled Him with wonder ; priests in their white clothing killing sheep and burning them on altars ; priests blowing silver trumpets and cow-horns ; men and boys singing psalms together in great bands. But most of all He was attracted by the teachers, who sat on coloured mats, under the arches and among the pillars, speaking, some quietly, some loudly, to the crowds gathered round them.

At the end of the week the people who had come from Nazareth harnessed their asses and camels and started for home again, disappearing as they had come, over the hill of Olivet. By the evening, they were down close to the river-side, and then Joseph and Mary remembered that they had not seen Jesus since the morning. They inquired of all the people travelling with them if they knew where He was, but nobody had seen Him. They were afraid that He had got lost, and returned to Jerusalem as quickly as they could, inquiring for Him everywhere, but they could hear nothing about Him.

Next day they went to the Temple, and there they found Him. He had never missed them. Dressed in His little holiday tunic, He was sitting

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with some of His companions on the coloured pavement, listening to the teachers He liked best. When He did not understand what they were saying, He asked them questions. There was nothing very strange in this. He was only doing what He had heard the men do. For the teachers in the Temple were not like the ministers of our time. They liked to be asked questions, and to answer them.

Joseph and Mary rejoiced that they had found their Boy, but they were astonished to hear the questions He asked. The grave teachers were good at arguing with men, but they were not good at answering the questions of a child, and it sometimes happened that they were not able to answer this wonderful Boy. They unrolled their scrolls of writing, but they were not able to convince Jesus with their answers.

At length Jesus saw the anxious face of His mother looking at Him and He came over to her. She asked Him why He had remained behind, for Joseph and she had sought for Him sorrowing. He answered, innocently, that they surely knew He would be in the Temple, which He called His Father's house. He then came away with them.





THE FIRST DRAUGHT OF FISHES

JESUS had been living up in the hills of Galilee for some time, most likely in His mother's house at Nazareth. John the Baptist had been put to death, and it was said that the rulers in Jerusalem who had charge of the Golden Temple intended to take Jesus, and put Him in prison. He had chosen twelve of His companions to be His disciples, who were to help Him in teaching the people, but they had all gone away to their own homes. It was then the winter time of the year, when the streams and burns were so deep, that it was dangerous to try to wade across them, and there were no bridges. His disciples were mostly young fishermen. They did not fish in the salt sea, as our fishermen do, but they fished in the large fresh-water Lake of Gennesaret. Although the Lake was only about the size of Lake Windermere in England, there were many towns round its shores, and a great many fishing boats sailed to and fro upon it.

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The boats were about the size of our fishing boats, and sharp at both ends, with one mast, and a single high sail. They fished with nets, let down into the water like our herring nets, and the men had plenty of work to do, for the people in the towns round the Lake liked fish, and dried them, on the rocks, in the sun, and stored them up for winter.

But the boats on the Lake were sometimes put to a very different use. We read that the people on opposite sides of the water went to war, and launched their boats out on to the quiet Lake, and fought with each other like tigers. We never know what people will do when they begin fighting, but all little children will agree that the fishermen would have been much better employed in killing fish to feed their families, than in trying to kill each other.

The five fishermen companions of Jesus who had gone back to their boats and their nets, had been so busy at work again, going out in the evening when the sun was setting over the green hills of Galilee, and returning in the morning when the rosy dawn was creeping over the water, that they were not thinking much of Jesus, or of His work.

But when the spring returned, Jesus came down from the hills and gathered them round Him

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once more in the little town of Capernaum, and began teaching the people openly in the villages round the Lake and in the fields, and on the shore covered with white shells. And often while He was teaching, some of His young companions were out fishing on the blue water, getting food for themselves and their families.

Now it happened one morning that He was speaking to a crowd of people on the shore, when two boats were rowed in, and run up on the beach, and the young fishermen threw the brown nets over the side, and began washing them in the water. Jesus went into the boat belonging to His disciple Peter, and asked him to push out a little from the white shore. Sitting down in the stern, He taught the people who had come crowding to hear Him, as they stood in the sunshine, in their cloaks of different colours.

Men have often preached to crowds of people sitting on the grass on a summer day, but no man ever spoke as Jesus did, lifting up His hands to the birds as they flew over His head, or pointing to the ploughman in the brown field on the hill-side, for He told the people stories, and pointed to things while He spoke. When He stopped speaking He used to send the people away, but

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sometimes they would wait on to hear more. But this morning He sent them away to their homes, and turning to Peter He told him to push his boat out into the deep water and fish, for they had no fish, having caught nothing all the night before. But Peter objected. He was hungry and tired, and wished to go home and sleep, and he told Jesus that they had been out all night toiling, and had caught nothing. Having said this, Peter began to think, and changed his mind, and told Jesus that he would row out, because He had asked him. Although he told the young fishermen to push out the oars and row out into the deep water, Peter did not expect to catch anything.

Jesus sat in silence in the stern of the boat looking at the water, while the young men tugged at the creaking oars, and Peter held the tiller, steering the boat slowly out into the middle of the blue lake. When they reached the right place, Peter let out the nets gradually over the side, while the young men rowed the boat slowly round in a wide ring, and Jesus sat quietly watching what they were doing.

Suddenly Peter's manner changed. They were catching fish. He knew it from the weight of the nets, as he held the ropes in his hands. The





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weight grew greater until Peter thought the very nets would break with fish. Then he called to the men in the other boat, on the beach, to come quickly and help them, for they were all partners in the fishing. James and John knew the shout, and leaping into their boat, thrust out the oars, and soon they were rowing out to Peter, with long strokes, making as much speed as they could, for a good catch of fish meant a lot of money.

When they arrived, they helped to haul in the nets carefully and shook the silvery fish into the boats until they were laden down to the very water's edge, and were like to sink, and then they rowed them very gently to the shore.

When Peter saw the great draught of fishes, he felt wicked and miserable for having spoken to Jesus in the way he did, and kneeling down with his hands over his face, at Jesus' feet, he asked Him to go away and leave him, for he was a sinful man.

But Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself. He knew that although Peter had a strong will and a quick temper, he had a good kind heart, and He spoke cheerfully to the man who felt so miserable and repentant. He told him to have no fear, for he would yet catch men for His sake.

THE SOWER

JESUS was again in His favourite town of Capernaum, by the side of the blue Lake of Gennesaret, and He was living in His disciple Peter's house, going out sailing in his boat, climbing the hills, and speaking to the people wherever they were gathered together. The weather was very hot, for it was autumn, the hottest time in all the year. The brown hills across the Lake shimmered in a haze of heat, and in the vineyards the purple grapes were being cut from the branches, and tossed into large baskets to be carried away and have the juice squeezed out for wine. It was also the merry time of the year, for the people lived by selling their wine and wool and oil and honey and corn, and if the season was good, and the harvest rich, they rejoiced in each other's houses, and had a harvest thanksgiving in the synagogue, just as we have in our country churches.

Jesus had been teaching the people who came in crowds to the beach of white shells, where the breeze from off the water made it pleasant. His way of teaching was the way that children like. He

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told them stories about fruit and flowers, and birds and precious pearls, and hidden treasures, and the countrymen in their brown cloaks, and the women in their red dresses, leading children by the hand, came in great numbers to hear Him, for they loved to listen to Jesus, although the Scribes of the synagogue scolded them for doing so. What would you not give to be amongst that crowd by the side of that blue Lake, holding your mother's hand, and listening to Jesus? You cannot do that, but you can hear what He said to the little brown-legged children of Galilee, if you will only read and listen.

Jesus had gone into Peter's boat, and it was pushed out a little way from the shore so that all the people could see Him, and that they should not crowd close round Him. Some were standing with bare feet in the warm shallow water, so eager were they to hear every word.

Between the crowd on the shore and the hills was the rich plain of Gennesaret, where the brown earth had already been turned over by the farmers with their wooden spades and ploughs. The winter wheat was being sown by a strong man with a sheet full of seed tied round his neck from which he took handfuls, and flung it away from him in a shower on each side, as he walked slowly from

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end to end of the field, followed by a flock of black crows that swooped down here and there behind him to pick up some of the seed.

It was of this farmer sowing seed that Jesus spoke to the people, and of what it meant.

“See,” He said, “a sower went out to sow, and it happened that some of his seed fell on the hard footpath through the field, and the birds came down and picked it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where there was little earth, and it sprang up soon, because it had little earth, but when the sun was hot it withered away, for it had no root. Some fell among young thorns, that grew up with it and choked it. But some fell on good ground, where it grew up and had fruit, some more and some less.”

The people listened to this little story, just as you would listen ; but, like you, they didn't know the meaning of it. Even His disciples did not know. A man in a field, sowing wheat ? They could not find out His meaning. But Jesus went on to tell the people other stories, and no one liked to ask Him for the meaning, and when He ended, He sent the people away to their homes.

When Jesus got home to Peter's house, and they were talking over what had happened during the day, the disciples told Him that they did not know

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what He meant by the story of the Sower, for He had not told the people the meaning. Jesus seemed to be surprised, and said that if they did not understand that story, they would not understand other simple stories. And then He told them the meaning, and this is it.

His words which He scattered over the people when He spoke were like the seed. When any one heard Him and did not understand, other thoughts would come into their minds, and they would forget what He had said. That was what He meant by the crows getting the seed that fell on the hard footpath.

Any one who heard His words joyfully, and believed Him for a while, but not for long, and could not resist temptation when it came, was like the seed that fell on rocky places and was soon withered by the sun.

Others heard His words and remembered them, but they were so taken up with the cares and riches and pleasures of life that they forgot all about doing good. That was what He meant by the seed that fell among the young thorns that grew up and choked it.

But there were other men, women, and little children with honest, good, and pure hearts, who, when they heard His words, did not forget them, but held them fast, and did as He told them, some

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doing much good and some doing less. That was what He meant by the seed that fell into good ground and brought forth much fruit.

The story of the Sower which had perplexed the disciples was all quite plain now. When we wish to speak of a good minister or a good teacher, we now use the words of Jesus, and say that he sows good seed in the minds of the children, that will bear good fruit some day.

We may be sure that Peter's wife would tell her children to listen to what Jesus was saying and that His words were precious seed that they must never lose. And while we know of the stories He told to the grown-up people, and that are written in the Bible, there were other stories for little children which He told them as they sat on His knee or on the floor at His feet in that small fisherman's house looking out upon the blue water, stories which we shall never know, but we may be sure they were full of love and tenderness.

If you saw Jesus scattering seeds of gold, would you not hold up your little hands to catch some? He has said that His words are seeds far better than gold, for they can grow and help you to be good. Many of His words you have already been taught and know, and you must try never to forget them.

JESUS STILLING THE STORM

JESUS was still at the Lake-side, for nowhere did He find people so willing to listen to Him. He told them stories, and He did not always tell them the meaning, but He explained His meaning privately to His disciples, so that they might be able to teach the people when their time came.

It was still the hot autumn time and He had had a very hard day's work, and it was now getting towards evening. His friends wanted Him to get some rest, but they saw He would get none if He remained where He was, so they got ready Peter's big fishing boat, and asked Him to sail with them across the Lake to a quiet place where He could rest. But the people were so fond of Jesus that He could not get away, until His disciples came round about Him, and took Him down to the boat.

Crowds followed Him down to the side of the water, and some of them even asked to be allowed to go in the boat with Him, but He would not have them. When they pleaded to get with Him, He told them wearily that birds had their nests, and foxes

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had their holes, but He had not a place where He could lay down His head and be at rest.

He was so worn out that His disciples were glad to get Him away. Pushing the boat off the pebbly beach, they put out the long oars, and rowed away. But some of the people also got into little boats and rowed alongside, keeping up with Him to see where He was going to. But that was what the disciples did not wish them to know, so hoisting the huge sail up to the top of the mast, with the setting sun glowing red upon it, they sailed quickly away from the little boats, telling the people that they should go back home.

All was now quiet, with Peter steering, and the sun as it was setting steeped the hills in purple and red. Peter got Jesus to lie down and rest, and made a pillow for Him of the leathern cushion on which the steersman usually sat, with his thick blue cloak wrapped about Him, the great red sail creaking on the mast above Him, and the water rippling along the side of the boat, as the breeze swung it to and fro. Jesus soon fell asleep with Peter watching Him, as he steered southwards down the Lake.

The boat was full of men, for all the disciples were there, and as they sailed away towards Gadara, on the opposite side, some of the disciples would no



JOSE SOPER

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doubt lie down and sleep also. As the sun went down the red light faded from the bare hills, the water became dark, the sky was overcast with clouds, and Peter saw that a change in the weather was coming.

The fishermen of Gennesaret had to be good sailors, for it was a dangerous Lake to sail upon. Sometimes sudden squalls of wind came rushing down the glens, and in a few minutes the blue mirror of the Lake was lashed into foaming waves. Even on a calm day the fishermen had to keep the rope of the sail in their hand, for if a gale caught them unprepared, the boat would capsize and sink before they could help themselves.

Peter watched the coming change in the weather, looking sometimes into the darkness ahead, and sometimes at Jesus, who lay sound asleep, as if He had been sleeping in a bed, instead of in a rocking boat. The weather grew worse, until the great sail had to be let down and securely fastened, and the long oars put out, with two men at each, to row them to the shore. But soon all that the men could do was to keep the bow of the boat to the waves, and drift before the gale, as it whipped the tops off the waves, and sent the spray flying along the Lake like white mist.

The waves were now very high, and they could

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not see them coming in the darkness, and when one after another hit the boat, and came splashing over them, the men knew that they were in great danger, and held to their seats to keep the boat steady, hoping that the storm would go down before they were driven on to the shore. They looked at Jesus in wonder, for He was still sleeping.

A larger wave than usual came pouring in over the side of the boat, and believing that they were all going to be drowned, the disciples roused Jesus with their cries—"Master, Master, we are sinking!" Jesus awoke, and seeing their terror and the storm, and the heaving boat, He looked out upon the heaving waves, and said, "Peace! Be still!" The disciples could hardly hear His voice amid the roaring of the wind, but suddenly they felt the change, for there came a great calm. Storms often pass away on that Lake as quickly as they come, yet the disciples were filled with amazement. A minute before they believed they were all going to be drowned, but He had saved them, and they sat looking at Him in wonder and awe.

"Why were you afraid?" He asked. "Do you not yet trust Me?" They heard His questions, but they were afraid to answer Him. Even Peter, who had been in many a storm, and who was not usually

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afraid to speak, could give Jesus no answer. In their terror when the waves broke over them, and in their struggle to keep the boat right, they had forgotten all about their young Master, until some one suddenly remembered Him, and cried out to Him for help.

Oars were put out again, perhaps the big brown sail was hoisted to the wind, and the boat's head was turned round to the way they wished to go, and once more they were gliding quickly through the water towards Gadara. As they sailed, the men talked of the great danger they had been in, and of the wonderful way in which they had been saved, and what they said shows that even among His disciples there were many who did not yet understand Jesus or His power.

“Who is this that can command the winds and the waves, and they obey Him?” they asked each other in low voices. Perhaps they thought that Jesus would answer their question, but this He did not do.

When people are in great trouble and fear, like these fishermen in the storm, they too often forget all about God and Jesus; but little children should remember that Jesus is their comforter and their friend, and should come to

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Him with all their griefs and trials, and ask His help as the disciples did in the storm on the Sea of Galilee.



THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

AGAIN Jesus had taken His disciples away in the large fishing boat, sailing this time towards the north end of the Lake. The people watched the boat with the high sail, as it passed out into the blue water, and seeing it was not going very far away, they followed it on foot along the shore.

Jesus landed at a grassy place and, leading the way, went up the side of a hill that was near, to speak again to the people. Sitting down upon a rising place as was His custom, He spoke to them about God and the Kingdom of Heaven that was soon to come upon the earth.

The afternoon wore on, and the sun upon the hills of Galilee told those who were watching that people who had far to go home should think of starting. His disciples were uneasy because it was not safe to walk round the end of the Lake after dark, even although there was a full moon, because of the wild animals to be met with, and the deep streams to cross. They waited for some time, but as He went on teaching the people, they did a bold thing. One of them plucked Him by His cloak, saying that the place was lonely, and the day was

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past, and that He should send the people away to get food. Jesus answered that the people need not go, if they gave them food. The disciple who had spoken seems to have been Philip, and he exclaimed in surprise that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough to give every one a little, for there were over five thousand people gathered there.

The disciples usually took some bread with them in the boat, and Jesus asked what bread they had. Andrew, speaking for them all, said that there was a lad there with five barley loaves and two small fishes, but that would be nothing among so many.

Jesus told them to make the people sit down upon the grass, for it was a grassy place, and when they were seated, He took the loaves in His hands and gave thanks to God for the food, which was the usual thing to do in that country, and then He gave the bread to His disciples, who divided it out amongst the men, women, and little children.

Taking the fishes from the boy, He did the same thing, and the disciples gave them to the people also, until they had got as much as they wanted of the loaves and fishes. Jesus and His disciples ate with the rest.

When they were all satisfied, Jesus surprised

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His disciples by telling them to gather up the broken pieces that remained, so that nothing should be wasted.

In their cloaks of brown and grey, the disciples went through amongst the people gathering the broken pieces in a corner of their cloak, and bringing them to the feet of Jesus, and when they had finished gathering, there was as much as would have filled twelve of the people's common wicker baskets.

When the people saw this great wonder, they said one to another that Jesus was truly the Prophet that should come into the world, meaning that He was indeed the Christ.

Many of the men, now that their hunger was satisfied, resolved to stay all night there with Jesus and His disciples. They talked excitedly with each other about Him and the wonderful things which He said and did. They whispered to His disciples, and the disciples were not displeased with what they said, although they answered that they did not think Jesus would consent. The men talked in groups, and their voices grew louder until Jesus heard what they were saying. They were saying that they would make Jesus their King, and if He would not consent, they would take Him by force and make Him their King. It seems strange to us now that

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these men should have talked such foolishness, and that the disciples should have listened to them. They had just seen the wonders that Jesus could do. Did they think they could hold Him with their hands, and force a crown upon His head, if He did not want it ?

Jesus was not angry with them. He knew these men were like sheep without a shepherd to lead them. He knew that they wished to pay Him the greatest honour they could think of. Kings and soldiers, gold and jewels, were their ideas of greatness. Riches were the greatest thing in the world to them, but He had come to teach them that love and truth, honesty and goodness, were better far than pearls and rubies.

Turning to His disciples, He ordered them to take the boat and sail away to the other side of the Lake. When they were gone, He told the people that they must all go home, for He wished to be alone, and leaving them, He went higher up the hill. They watched Him until His figure was lost in the shadows of the evening, and then they went away leaving Him alone.

There are few times in which we read of young people being able to be of service to Jesus, but this is one of them. We can almost see the blush on



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the ruddy brown cheeks of the country boy as he came forward to Jesus with his little basket of loaves, for he was the only one in all the crowd who could give Jesus what He wanted. That boy of Galilee did not know when he began to follow Jesus that He would ever speak to him, but he is famous now all over the world as the boy who had the five barley loaves and the two small fishes.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

WHEN King David was a lad, he used to watch his father's sheep down in the fields below the little town of Bethlehem on the hill. It was in these fields that the shepherds as they watched their flock saw the vision of angels on the night that Jesus was born.

David was strong and brave, and he needed to be, for watching the sheep in these parts did not mean, as it means in our country, herding them in one place, so that they should not stray away into other fields. It meant watching for big red foxes, fierce wolves, hyænas, and other wild beasts that dashed in among the flocks, and it also meant fighting with them and driving them off, even at the risk of your life.

The shepherds of that country, besides their long shepherd's staff, carried a knife, a club, and a sling fastened to their strong leather belt that kept their sheepskin coat together, for there were no buttons in these days. If a wild beast did not run away when they shouted and slung stones at it, they rushed upon it with club and knife to kill it.

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It was King David's boast that he had killed a lion and a bear that attacked his father's sheep in this way, but David was very strong, and of great courage.

When the sheep heard their shepherd shouting at a wild animal they knew they were in danger and rushed to get behind him, and if he was a brave man, he would stand out in front of his flock to fight the beast. Sometimes the shepherds had fierce dogs to help them, and we know how dogs will attack a bull or a bear or a wolf if their master sets them on, but the shepherds seldom had sheep-dogs in that country, and they had to trust to their own hands to help them in a fight.

These shepherds had a nice way of amusing themselves during their long lonely days of watching, for you must remember they had no books to read. They had a shepherd's pipe, on which they played a few strange shrill notes that could be heard a long way off, and although the notes were few, they were greatly pleased with their simple music. Their pipe was made out of a dry hollow reed about a foot long, and sometimes they danced to their own music, but the pipe had a better use still. When they wished to lead their sheep from one grassy place to another, they called them in a peculiar way, and

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the sheep, knowing their own shepherd's voice, came jumping down from their rocky places and followed him, as he played upon his little shepherd's pipe, out of the glen, or homewards, or wherever he wished to lead them.

Often at night the shepherds led them to a sheltered place surrounded with high walls made of stone and earth, and with strong prickly briers along the top of the walls, and only one small door to enter by. When the sheep were all inside, the good shepherd shut the door, or simply filled up the doorway with the strongest briers he could find, and then he lay down in his thick cloak to sleep, for his sheep were safe for the night.

Jesus had seen sheep, driven in terrified flocks into Jerusalem by the sheep gate, and along to the sheep market, and up the steep street to the great Temple, where they were killed and burnt in hundreds, and He thought how different were the drivers there from the good shepherds of Galilee, who knew their sheep by their names, and led them from place to place through the glens. And so Jesus spoke to the people of Jerusalem about the good shepherd and his sheep. And the people listened, for He sometimes said that He Himself was the Good Shepherd, and that His sheep

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were His followers, and that He was ready to die for them.

He told them that any man who did not go into the sheepfold by the little door, but climbed in by some other way, was a thief and a robber. The shepherd always came in by the door. The man at the door would open it to the shepherd, and he would call his own sheep by their names, and lead them out of the fold, and when they were all out, he would go in front of them, and the sheep would follow him, for they knew his voice. They would not follow a stranger, but flee from him, because the sheep did not know the voice of strangers.

When Jesus told the people this story, they did not always know that He was speaking about Himself as the Good Shepherd, and that His friends who followed Him and trusted Him were the sheep, and so he had to explain the story to them. He told them that He was at the door of the sheepfold. All who had come before Him were thieves and robbers, and nobody would listen to them. If any man came to Him, he could go into His fold and be safe, and go out and in and find pasture. Thieves came only to steal and kill and destroy ; but He came that people might have life. He was the Good

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Shepherd, and would lay down His life for His sheep. A servant, to whom the sheep do not belong, and who is not the shepherd, when he sees a wolf coming, leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches at them and scatters them ; he runs away because he is only a servant and does not care for the sheep.

“I am the Good Shepherd,” Jesus said, “I know My own followers, and they know Me, even as God My Father knows Me, and I know Him, and I shall lay down My life for them. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This power I received from God.”

These beautiful words of Jesus about the Good Shepherd and the sheep are very dear to little children, but they had a strange effect upon the people of Jerusalem who heard them. Some people praised Him with all their might. Others said He deserved to be scourged for saying such things, and the people were so divided about Him that they were almost fighting. The wildest among them shrieked, and thrust their fingers into their ears and stamped their feet in rage.

“He is mad !” they cried, “why do you listen to Him ?” These were the Temple rulers who wished to kill Him. But there were some even among the

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Temple rulers who shook their heads thoughtfully as they said, "No, these are not the words of a madman."

All children like to see the little white lambs frisking about in the meadows in the sunshine, and running races with each other over the buttercups and daisies, and older people say that little children are just like these little lambs. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who calls the little ones to follow Him, and He will lead them to a place of safety, and all little children who hear His voice should follow Him because He loves them so.

THE PRODIGAL SON

JESUS was still in the land of the shepherds across the river from Jericho, where there were green glens for the sheep and cattle to pasture in, and plenty of streams of water. It was wintertime, and the burns were leaping in waterfalls from the hills, and dashing down their rocky channels so that the fields were flooded, and at the shallow crossing-places the water was so deep that even long-legged camels would not venture through.

Jesus was living in a place where the people were kind to Him and listened to His teaching, not contradicting Him as they did on the other side of the river, and never threatening to kill Him or stone Him with stones as they had done in Jerusalem up on the hills of Judea. Of course there were always village Scribes to ask Him questions, and Pharisees who did not believe what He said, and told the people that as He was not one of their teachers, they should not listen to Him. But the common people, the shepherds, camel-drivers, field labourers, and vine-dressers, heard Him gladly, for none of their teachers had





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ever taken the trouble to come among them and speak to them in the loving way that Jesus did. He even spoke to the women, and the little children that ran about in ragged sheepskin jackets were not too small for Him to notice and to speak to.

He had been speaking to the people in one of the villages, telling them short stories, which was the way in which He spoke to them now. There were Pharisees there in their long robes, standing apart from the common people lest any of them should touch their clothing.

It was not because they were afraid that their touch would dirty their fine clothes, for some of them were poor Pharisees, with holes in their cloaks.

They could not bear to be touched by a common person because they believed that they themselves were pure and holy, and that the common people were vile and wicked, and that if they touched these poor people they would be no longer pure. We smile to think of this, because it is so very foolish, but it was so important in these days that Jesus often spoke about it. And so He told the people another story which was intended for the Pharisees who thought themselves so very good, and who were not pleased when they saw bad people changing their ways and becoming good, and because of Jesus

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telling them that God would forgive them if they gave up their wicked ways and asked to be forgiven. This is the story.

There was once a rich man who had two sons. The younger son asked for his share of his father's money and his father gave it to him, and he went away into a far country and squandered it among bad companions. When his money was all gone, there came a scarcity of food, and he could not get anything to eat without working for it, for his friends all left him when his money was done.

He sought work, and a man sent him out into the wild country to herd and watch his swine. Now this was the lowest kind of work that a Jew could be put to, for the Jews hated swine. He got very little pay, and some days he was so hungry that he would have liked to have eaten the roots that the swine ate. His thoughts often turned to his father's house where even the servants were well fed, but he was afraid to go home.

One day as he sat watching the swine and thinking, he came to his right mind, and resolved to return to his father. He would confess to him that he had done very wrong and did not deserve to be forgiven, and would ask to be taken in just as a servant.

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Now his father was a very kind-hearted and forgiving man. He had never ceased to love his son, and every day he went out and looked down the road to see if he was not coming home. And one day he saw him coming, and while yet he was a long way off he ran to meet him, and putting his arms about his son's neck he kissed him joyfully. His son began to tell him how sorry he was, but his kind father would not listen to him. He called to his servants to bring out his best cloak, and a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, and told them to make ready a feast, for they would dance and be merry that night, because his long lost son had returned to him again.

When the elder brother came home from his work, he heard the sound of music and dancing in the house and asked the servants what it meant. They told him that his father had made a feast because his brother had come home again. But the elder brother was angry and would not go in, and when his kind father came out and spoke to him, he answered gloomily that he had served his father for many years and had not disobeyed him, but he had never got even a young goat with which to make a feast and make merry with his friends, yet when this younger son came home, after spending

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his father's money in bad company, a fat calf was killed for him.

Many fathers would have been angry with this sulky son for having so little love for the brother with whom he had played as a little child in the nursery, and for being offended with his father because he had been kind and forgiving. But that was not how Jesus told the story. The father in His story was not angry or even sharp with his elder son. He was nothing but kind to both. He told his elder son that he was always with him, and all that he had belonged to him, and that it was right that they should all make merry and be glad when his brother returned, for his brother was as one that had been lost and was found.

That was the end of the story, and everybody knew Jesus meant that the Pharisees standing apart from the common people were like the elder brother. They would not rejoice and be glad when they saw the common people coming to Jesus. God was the kind Father over them all, who loved both the Pharisees who thought themselves so good, and the common people who thought themselves bad, and was ready to forgive them all, and bid them love one another.



THE LAST SUPPER

You have heard that the Passover Festival at Jerusalem was the most joyful of all the festivals. You may think that the Festival of Bowers, when the fruits were ripe and all the people left their houses, and lived in green bowers in their gardens and fields, would be a more joyful time for the children, but it was not. The Passover Festival was held that old and young should rejoice in memory of the most joyful thing that ever happened to the Jewish people.

Once upon a time the Jews were all slaves in Egypt, making bricks out of the brown mud of the river Nile, and building great walls and castles for their Egyptian masters, who scourged their backs if they did not work hard enough, and flung their little baby boys into the deep river Nile, if they thought there were too many of them. This went on for many years, until Moses won their freedom, and led them out of Egypt, away to the land of Palestine, where they remained ever after. This great deliverance is still so much thought of by Jews that in all

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parts of the world they eat their joyful Passover Supper on the same night, in memory of what happened thousands of years ago.

The greatest thing about the festival was this supper, to put them in mind of the last supper the Jews partook of in Egypt at Moses' command, when the men ate it standing, with their cloaks and sandals on, and with sticks in their hands, ready for the journey. On that night the angel of death passed over the land, and so it is called the Passover. In the time of Jesus the people were told that, because the last supper in Egypt had been one of fear and anxiety, they were to keep it now with every sign of joy and happiness. And so they had a fine white tablecloth put on the table, and the room lit up with plenty of lamps and candles, and all put on their best clothes, and rested at ease on couches and cushions with their feet bare, just to show how happy they were, and that they were not going on a journey at all.

In every cottage and house in the land, at the evening hour, when the first three stars appeared in the violet sky, and in every house in crowded Jerusalem, and in every tent round about it, the people began their happy Passover supper, and kept it up joyfully for many happy hours.

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Jesus had eaten His Passover supper with His disciples for three years, and they wondered in what house He would have it this time. He told them to go to a friend in Jerusalem who had a large room upstairs, where they could be alone and prepare the supper there. Peter and John knew that He wished to have it, not among His friends in Bethany, but in the midst of the crowded city.

They had much to do, for they had to buy bread and wine, and water, and vinegar, and oil. They had also to make a sort of bitter salad in a bowl to remind them of the bitter slavery in Egypt. But the principal thing at the supper was the little lamb which had to be killed by a priest in the Temple and roasted whole.

When the disciples were all seated on their couches round the table in that brightly lighted room, with the door shut, and Jesus at the head of the table like the father of them all, He told them that He was glad, for He had been longing to eat that supper with them alone, for He had much to tell them. But He was grieved with them also, for He had noticed them quarrelling as to who should get the best seats. Then He did a thing which made Peter so sorry that he did not know what to do. Jesus took water and a towel and

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washed all their feet, a thing which slaves did ; and then He told them, that as He had done so to them, so ought they to be willing to wash each other's feet, and no longer think themselves better than one another.

As He blessed and broke the bread and poured out the wine in the way that fathers did at every table that night, He spoke of His coming death, and told them that the bread was like His body, broken for them, and that the wine was like His blood, poured out for them. He told them that they were to continue holding this Supper in memory of Him ; and so it is now called the Lord's Supper.

The disciples were grieved when they heard Jesus speaking in this way and saw that the joy of His heart had now given way to sadness, and they wondered what was vexing Him so much. Then He told them that one of them sitting at that table would betray Him to His enemies. They were all amazed, and all denied it and would not believe it, until Jesus repeated it again. Then Peter told John, who was the disciple whom Jesus loved, to ask Him who it was that should do this thing. Now John was so near Him that he could rest his head upon Jesus' breast, and leaning back he asked



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the question. Jesus answered that it was the one to whom He would give a piece of bread sopped in the bitter salad, and He handed it to Judas Iscariot, telling him to go quickly away.

Judas, with his face flushed with anger, rose immediately and went out into the night. He could not stay any longer since Jesus knew what he had done. For Judas had gone to the priests up in the Golden Temple and sold his Master for thirty silver coins, the price of a slave. Judas was to bring them word when and where they could take Jesus a prisoner quietly without letting the people know, and the priests were to send soldiers to take Him. Jesus knew what Judas had done, but His disciples did not know, or they would have laid hands on the traitor.

When Judas went out of the room the sadness left Jesus' face, and He talked with His disciples, calling them His friends and His little children, telling them why He had chosen them to be His disciples, and that not one of them had been lost but Judas. He told them what they were to do when He was killed. He told them about God His Father in Heaven, and that He would guard and keep them. He told them of His danger, and that in terror they would all forsake Him. He

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smiled sadly when Peter said that though all the other disciples forsook their Master yet he would never do it. He would rather die than forsake Jesus.

Before going out, Jesus gave them what He called a new commandment by which people would know that they were followers of His, and it was this—"Little children, love one another. By this shall it be known that you are My disciples, if you have great love one toward another." This is surely the sweetest and greatest command that was ever given by a leader to his followers, and yet how often has it been broken by those who profess to love Him. These eleven disciples did not know how difficult they would find it to keep that simple command, to love each other as Jesus had loved them.

Jesus prayed to God His Father to help His disciples to keep His commandment, and He prayed for all men everywhere, that they too might worship God, and obey His will. He was sorry to part from them ; but a little before midnight, and after the usual Passover psalm was sung, He went out with them into the moonlit city street, intending to go over the Kedron bridge to the Mount of Olives.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

IN an olive garden, into which Jesus had gone with His disciples to pray at night, He was taken a prisoner by a band of soldiers sent by the priests of the Golden Temple, who were led to the spot by Judas Iscariot the traitor. He was taken back to the city with His hands bound, and kept in the soldiers' guard-room, where they mocked and jeered at Him, asking Him to prophecy which one of them had struck Him. He was being kept by the soldiers until morning light should dawn in the skies, for the rulers of the Temple were to hold an early meeting to settle what they should do with Him now that they had Him in their power.

About seventy of the leading priests and rulers and chief men of the city met in their hall of meeting with the high priest, in his flowing red robes, sitting on a soft cushion above them all, as the leader and chairman. Jesus was brought before him, His white tunic soiled by the hands of the soldiers, His hair disordered, His hands tied with a rough cord, and with marks of sorrow and pain on His face.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

Beside Him stood a Roman soldier, holding the cord as if Jesus had been a wild beast.

It did not take the high priest and his companions long to settle what was to be done, for it had all been arranged beforehand. Almost every man there hated Jesus and wished Him dead. They condemned Him to death for saying He was the Christ, and for disobeying their laws. But they had not the power to put any one to death, because the Romans had conquered their country, and would not allow them to kill anybody without their permission. The Jews had a king of their own in Jerusalem, but he was only a mock king. The real king was Pilate, the Roman Governor, who ruled over them with his soldiers, and he could order any prisoner to be put to death.

And so these city rulers resolved to take Jesus to Pilate and ask him to put Jesus to death.

Jesus' friends were astonished when the rulers condemned Him to die. They expected that they would only scourge Him and let Him go. Judas was filled with horror and remorse. He went to the priests and begged them to have mercy on Jesus; and, when they would not listen, he flung his thirty silver pieces at them and went away and hanged himself.

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But the remorse of Judas Iscariot had no effect on the cruel priests. They ordered the soldiers to lead Jesus through the streets to the Prætorium, King Herod's old palace on Mount Zion, where the Roman Governor lived. The priests and rulers followed after Him with a crowd of the common people. The priests sent a message to Pilate asking if he would come out and speak with them. They thought themselves too pure to go into the house of a foreigner at the Passover time, and Pilate sent out word to them to go round to the pavement at the judgment hall, where he usually judged the people, and he would speak to them there.

The judgment place was like a fine hall, open to the blue skies, with a platform of beautiful coloured stones, higher than the people's heads, on which was the Governor's white marble chair of judgment, in which he sat and listened to the cases brought before him. There was a private door from the palace out to this Roman judgment seat.

Jesus was taken up to stand on this platform guarded by two Roman soldiers; and the priests when they saw Him called Him names, and stirred up the rabble to yell at Him. When Pilate came out and took his seat in the marble chair, he was

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surprised at the noise, and when the priests spoke he could not understand why they seemed to hate Jesus so much. He knew that Jesus had been speaking in the Temple and that He was an innocent person ; but he soon saw that it was because Jesus had spoken against their religious laws that the priests hated Him.

After hearing what the priests had to say, he took Jesus into his palace by the private door, and asked Him questions. His wife, Claudia, also sent a message to Pilate saying that Jesus was a good man and that he should not let Him be killed. Pilate went out again to his marble seat, and told the priests that he would scourge Jesus to please them, and then he would set Him free. But the priests stirred up the rabble to cry out against this with all their might.

Pilate then said that it was the custom to set free a prisoner at every festival time. He had in prison a robber called Barabbas, and he would either set free Jesus or Barabbas, whichever the people wished. Again the priests stirred up the people, and they shouted for Barabbas. Pilate then asked them what they wanted done to Jesus, and the answer came hissing back from a hundred mouths, "Crucify Him ! crucify Him !"

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

And so Jesus was taken away, and crucified, on a little hill by the side of the road, outside the city wall, with His heartbroken mother standing at the foot of the cross.

Pilate was afraid to do his duty. He was put there as a judge over the people, to see that nobody was wronged, and yet because the powerful priests and rulers yelled for Jesus' life, he ordered Him to be put to death, knowing that He was innocent. And so the name of Pilate has come down to us as that of a weak creature who crucified Jesus, because he was afraid to defend Him.

OUR LORD'S FIRST APPEARANCE AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

WHEN Jesus died upon the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew of high position in Jerusalem, kind hearted and a true lover of Jesus, hurried away to the Roman Governor's palace and begged to be allowed to bury Him. He was afraid that the priests would fling Jesus into the smoking Vale of Hinnom, where the bodies of worthless criminals were flung to get them out of the way. And Pilate, who had been greatly affected by the appearance of Jesus and what He had said at His trial, told Joseph that if he was a friend of Jesus, he could have His body, to bury Him in a proper way.

Joseph hastened back accompanied by a Roman soldier, who told the officer to take down the cross and give Jesus to His friends, although the chief priests were very much against it. With a push from the end of their pikes, the Roman soldiers, dressed in rough leather jackets and close-fitting brass helmets, told the Jewish priests and their



FIRST APPEARANCE AFTER RESURRECTION

shouting friends to stand back out of the way, and with strong arms they drew the cross out of the ground, and lowering it down, gave Jesus to His friends.

Joseph of Arimathea had told Nicodemus, another rich ruler, and they had brought with them white sheets and perfume to cover Jesus with, and, spreading out the sheets upon a thick mat, they wrapt Jesus in them, with spices of myrrh and aloes.

Joseph had a large garden not far away, not a garden of closely cut grass and pretty flower-beds like ours, but a place for growing gourds and melons and garlic, with white flowering almond trees and dark green olives, prickly cactus plants, and great roses of crimson and pink. A rich but uncultivated place, with shady walks and white stones. Rich men in those days liked to be buried in a corner of their own garden, not in a hole in the ground, but in a small cave cut in the white rock, where they were laid to rest in the dark, the doorway being filled up with a large stone. Joseph had caused such a cave to be cut out of the rock in the corner of his own garden where the scented rose trees blossomed, but the cave was all white and pure, for no one had yet been buried in it.

Jesus' friends laid Him down upon a strong mat.

FIRST APPEARANCE AFTER RESURRECTION

Joseph and Nicodemus and John and the other men taking each a corner lifted Him, and with Mary Magdalene and Jesus' own mother Mary, and other women following weeping behind, they carried Jesus down from the little hill outside the city walls where He was crucified, and away to the gate into Joseph's private garden. There were few who followed in that little procession, for He had been crucified with two thieves, as if He also were a thief.

The sun was sinking low over the trees, as the little band of faithful friends carried Jesus along the garden path towards the small cave in the rock where the rose trees grew. They tenderly lifted Him in and laid Him down inside, to be alone there until the Sabbath was past, when they would come back and wrap Him up more carefully.

The mouth of the cave, which was small, was closed by a flat stone like a millstone, that took two men to roll it, for it was so heavy. Having closed the door of the cave with this stone, their loving task was done. The early stars of evening were glittering through the trees as they came out of the garden again on their way to their homes in the city.

Up in the Golden Temple on Mount Moriah, the priests were already making preparations for a special day of burning sheep and bulls on the great white

FIRST APPEARANCE AFTER RESURRECTION

altar, believing that they would hear no more of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified.

But some of the priests were not so certain in their own mind, and they went to the Roman Governor and asked him to send a few soldiers to watch the door of the grave in the corner of that quiet garden, because Jesus had said that after three days He would rise again, and they feared His friends were intending to come and steal His body away.

And the quiet of that private garden was disturbed by a little group of careless soldiers in jingling leather jackets, and of proud priests in mantles of white. Going down to the little white cave, they stretched a string across the big stone, sealing the ends to the rock with their seals, so that no one should remove the stone without their knowing. The priests went away to join the festivities in the Temple, leaving three or four Roman soldiers to light a fire and pass the night, watching the cave, amusing themselves as best they could.

We are told that a little before the dawn an earthquake shook the ground and an angel in dazzling raiment passed through among the soldiers, and they were so terrified that they fell down and lay with their faces to the ground, while he rolled

FIRST APPEARANCE AFTER RESURRECTION

the stone away. When they recovered from their fright the white cave was empty, and no one was there, and the soldiers rose and hastened into the city. They afterwards said that the disciples of Jesus came and took Him away while they were asleep. This was to please the priests who gave them money.

In the light of early morning Mary Magdalene was at the door of the little cave standing weeping, for it was empty, and she saw a figure near that she took to be the gardener, and spoke to him, saying, if he had taken Jesus, to tell her where he had laid Him that she might take Him away.

“Mary!” was the simple answer, and then she knew it was Jesus. Falling down before Him, she exclaimed—

“Master,” and would have clasped His feet; but Jesus told her not to take hold of Him, for He had not yet gone up to His Father in Heaven. She was to go away and tell His disciples. And Mary fled out of the garden to tell what she had seen. But the disciples were very slow to believe what Mary and the other women told them, until they had proved it for themselves, for they had forgotten that Jesus had said He would rise again on the third day.

